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ABSTRACT

As part of an effort to correct major social problems, the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) was created in the State of Washington. The ECEAP offers comprehensive, quality preschool programs for children of families who have an income at or below the federal poverty level. An introductory section of the report provides background information on the ECEAP and describes the ECEAP's accomplishments that relate to education, health, social services, and parent involvement. A section on issues examines the demographics of the population served by the ECEAP and discusses the program's effect on children's transition to kindergarten and public school, the problem of dropping out of school, crime, and teenage pregnancy. A section on administration describes the agencies and agency collaborations that are involved in the delivery of the program. Additional sections discuss the future of the ECEAP, highlight the governor's support for the program, and offer concluding remarks. (PM)

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Washington's Future

1990 ANNUAL REPORT

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Annual Report — 1990

All we aspire to — all the future holds for us, and for our young children — is being determined by our current actions. Nowhere is this more true than in early childhood, for it is during this time, when a child is first developing expectations, and learning to succeed, or fail, that the foundations for the future are built.

It was upon this recognition that Washington's Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program was founded. Begun as a small pilot project in 1985, ECEAP has become one of Washington's biggest success stories, with children in every county of our state now being served through community based, family centered, comprehensive preschool programs.

As our most cost effective means of prevention, early childhood education is one of the best investments we can make in our children's future. Last year, ECEAP was able to serve 3,000 children. This year, with the addition of 1,000 new slots, we will be able to serve all eligible four year olds in the 1991-93 biennium.

National studies have shown the real benefit of early childhood education. The longitudinal study that is tracking ECEAP children is showing trends similar to these earlier studies. Laying a strong foundation for children now prevents a host of ills in the future; ills such as crime, teenage pregnancy, unemployment, drug abuse, and dropping out of school.

Unprecedented collaborations among ECEAP and state and community agencies are stretching state dollars and providing more comprehensive services to more children. The Interagency Council on Families, a consortium of state agencies that includes the Department of Community Development, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, Department of Health, Employment Security Department, and Department of Social and Health Services, is working to devise unique approaches to coordinated service delivery. Our goal is to create a truly accessible continuum of services for children and their families.

We have a blueprint for the future. To create that future, we must lay a foundation upon which children can flourish, and become well-adjusted, concerned, creative, involved citizens.

We owe it to our children, and we owe it to our future.

Booth Gardner

Governor Booth Gardner

WASHINGTON'S FUTURE

Washington State Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP)

Department of Community Development

Annual Report 1989-1990

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Executive Summary

"The future is not predetermined. It will become what we make it."

Governor Booth Gardner, Inaugural Address, 1989

Major social problems cannot be corrected as easily as they can be prevented. Crime, adult illiteracy, unemployment, underemployment, poverty, teen-age pregnancy, and a host of other social problems can be linked directly to the accessibility and adequacy of education. Failing at the beginning invariably means failing at the end — and at most steps in between.

Through Governor Booth Gardner and the State Legislature, private interest groups, local governments and the tribes, the State of Washington has embarked on a number of initiatives to halt the slide of many of Washington's families down the slope of poverty. The Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) is one such initiative designed to bring comprehensive, quality preschool programs to the children of families in poverty. To be eligible for ECEAP, a family must have an income at or below the Federal Poverty Level. This includes families on Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) and the "working poor." It is through ECEAP that we take our first step toward helping young children and their families learn to succeed. If we are to succeed as a society in the 21st Century, we cannot afford to divert — let alone waste entirely — any of our resources; and these children may well represent the best of our resources.

ECEAP works through families and the community to provide services to children, and recognizes that the family is the most important source of education for preschool children. ECEAP is administered at the state level by the Washington State Department of Community Development, which contracts with organizations to provide high-quality, comprehensive preschool programs specifically tailored to meet the needs of individual communities. The program is based on the premise that children from low-income families can benefit in both the short and long term from participation in a comprehensive preschool program designed to foster development, remedy problems, and increase skills. The approach also includes a common sense to the fact that parenting and educational functions should be integrated to provide the most effective environment for children's development. Parents are encouraged to participate in the program and to learn the skills they need to defeat the limitations of poverty.

In 1986, when ECEAP became fully operational, it served 1,000 children at a cost of $2.97 million. Based on the successes of that first and subsequent years, the program has consistently received both the Governor's personal endorsement and strong bipartisan support in the Legislature, and has expanded dramatically. In 1989-90, the program served almost 3,700 children in 30 of Washington's 39 counties. During Program Year 1990-91, the program will realize its goal of providing services in every Washington county.

Does ECEAP work? Yes. A longitudinal study, which is tracking ECEAP children and a control group over an eight-year period, has been providing data on participants and graduates since 1987, and the gains made by the children and the families involved are impressive. Parents report that they are more

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involved in the education of their children, both at home and in the common school system, and many report improved access to resources as a result of contact with ECEAP and through subsequent referrals. As for the children, while ECEAP's first wave of graduates is only now reaching the second grade, preliminary testing of ECEAP children at completion of their program participation shows marked gains in almost all the traits that accompany success in grade school. ECEAP children show progress during the program that far exceeds what might be expected from simple maturation, and on a wide range of fronts, from raised self-esteem and expectations, to enhanced vocabulary and cognitive abilities. And, there is every reason to believe that the successes of these children in grade school can be cumulative in effect. Some studies — such as that of the Perry Preschool Project and the Gray Early Training Project (ETP) — have shown convincingly that such early successes with similarly at-risk children can translate eventually into higher rates of high school graduation and employment, and even to such things as reduced rates of pregnancy among teenagers and reduced crime rates during adolescence.

What we have learned is what we suspected: the total learning climate for a child in the preschool years can profoundly affect later ability to benefit from, and even complete, education. Where children experience failure in those formative years, they learn to fail. Where they experience success, they learn to succeed. ECEAP teaches success.

With an eye toward making success possible for every child, Governor Booth Gardner has requested an enhancement of $14 million for ECEAP for the 1991-93 biennium. This enhancement, combined with federal Head Start services, will make ECEAP available to every eligible four-year-old (i.e., living at or below 100 percent of the FPL) in Washington State.

Success in school — being able and willing to benefit from education — is perhaps the single most important attribute of those who manage to break the cycle of poverty. Without education, poverty is too often passed from generation to generation with ever more devastating consequences. ECEAP can only be a first step, but it can be a catalytic first step over the threshold of full access to education. Without it, that threshold may be simply too high an obstacle for many of our children to climb.

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Background

Why ECEAP?

When a child is of preschool age, usually between three and five, the most reliable predictor of school success or failure is socioeconomic status.[1] As the child moves through school, measures of actual performance tend to overtake and pass socioeconomic indicators as more reliable predictors of success or failure. This is to say, the socially and economically disadvantaged child either quickly rises above the tide or drowns in it. While it is important and necessary to work with at-risk children throughout their educational careers, comprehensive intervention at the preschool level is a first, preventive step with potentially extraordinary consequences — consequences that are demonstrated from the beginning and which carry through until the end.

Ultimately, the purpose of a preschool program such as ECEAP goes beyond enabling an educationally at-risk child to enter the common school system with a better chance of succeeding in kindergarten, or even in the first few years of elementary school. The goal is to assist children and their families to succeed in the long range, by removing or diminishing often critical barriers to the process of leading full and productive lives.

ECEAP seeks to enhance the capacities of families to participate in the education of their children through both direct and indirect means, by tool building, resource sharing, and intervention in both educational and social services. When families tell us that they feel more in control of their lives, and that they are experiencing greater access to resources at the end of an ECEAP year, we know we have succeeded with the social services component of ECEAP. When these same families demonstrate an ongoing involvement with the educational system that houses their children, we know we have produced meaningful gains toward fulfilling our family empowerment goal within the educational component of ECEAP.

What is ECEAP?

The Legislative Context:

An Executive Request Bill from Governor Gardner resulted in a planning grant authorized by the Legislature in 1985, which allowed the State Department of Community Development (DCD), in consultation with a 30-member expert advisory committee mandated by the Early Childhood Assistance Act, to develop a blueprint for ECEAP. In 1986, that plan was endorsed by the Legislature with a grant of $2.97 million to begin serving 1,000 children at a handful of sites around the state. Since that time, ECEAP has enjoyed a strong record of success in the field, the continued support of the Governor, and bipartisan support from Washington State legislators, who more than doubled ECEAP's funding in 1987, to $12.1 million for the 1987-89 Biennium. During each of those years, service was extended to more than 2,000 children, reaching well over 4,000 during the course of the Biennium. During 1989-90, services were provided to almost 3,700 children in 30 of Washington's 39 counties. In 1990, a supplemental appropriation of $3 million was used to expand the program, and ECEAP enrollment topped 5,000 at the start of the 1990-91 Program Year. In addition, small grants have been awarded in the nine counties unserved by the program at the beginning of the Biennium for the purpose of developing service models that will bring ECEAP into these areas.

The Program:

ECEAP is a comprehensive, family focused preschool program, designed to help low-income preschool children succeed in the public education system. ECEAP addresses the educational, health, and social

"We stand aside as large numbers of children are damaged intellectually and socially in their first few years of life, and then rush in with remedial school programs and anticrime measures when the inevitable consequences of such neglect occur."

The Ford Foundation; The Common Good: Social Welfare and the American Future

needs of children while placing special emphasis on parent participation and the development of access for parents to community resources. Because so many factors influence a child's ability to learn and develop normally, ECEAP has four interrelated intervention points through which it attempts to foster in the child and family the ability to surmount obstacles to successful learning and development:

• Education: Children are prepared for entry into school through a developmentally appropriate learning environment; enhancement of cognitive, language and social skills; and exploration of the community in which they live;

• Health: Medical, dental, mental health, and nutritional needs of the children are evaluated and resources to remediate problems are obtained;

• Parent Involvement: Parents are directly involved in the classroom and in the education of their children, as well as in advising the local programs, and parent education and support groups; and

• Social Services: Staff undertake assessments, training and referrals designed to help family units become more functional and self sufficient, and to assist families in discovering resources available through a variety of state and local assistance programs.

At the end of the program year, participating children show remarkable increases in readiness in skills and attitudes that prepare them for entry into the common educational system. When they arrive at kindergarten, they will be able to perform well in situations and at tasks that would have been foreign to many of them without ECEAP.

What Has ECEAP Accomplished So Far?

In order to track ECEAP's success, a longitudinal study is being conducted over a period of eight years, through a contract with the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL), to measure the effectiveness of the program. A sampling of ECEAP children is being tracked from their entrance into the program through the fourth grade. A control group of children, who are demographically similar to ECEAP children but did not attend preschool, is being tracked simultaneously to provide comparison data.

At the end of the program year, participating children show remarkable increases in all areas that have been demonstrated to affect success in formal schooling; increases beyond what would be expected in the course of natural maturation. They are arriving at school believing in themselves. The skills they develop through ECEAP — and the support their families receive — prepare them for success.

Education

The education component of the ECEAP model is designed to enhance social skills, cognitive development, self-esteem, language skills, and to provide a motivation toward learning for participating children. The second-year longitudinal study results show that ECEAP children gain across the board in a wide range of measures designed to assess educational readiness. Specifically, the children:

• Develop confidence and overcome shyness;

• Develop very significant gains in language skills;

• Become more spontaneous, curious, and self-disciplined; and

• Acquire both gross and fine motor skills at a much higher rate than can be accounted for through normal rates of physical development.

Health

A program evaluation conducted during the first year of ECEAP operations showed that many serious health problems are first detected by ECEAP screenings; that 98.6 percent of hearing, 96.7 percent of vision, 96.1 percent of speech, 83.8 percent of dental, and 77.1 percent of medical problems were unknown to the parents of ECEAP children at the time of their enrollments. Many of these problems could have further complicated the learning process for these children had they not been detected and corrected.

ECEAP staff have been able to locate donations and public/private assistance support to pay for more than 70 percent of the costs of correcting problems they uncover, and some ECEAP funds have been used as dollars of last resort in this effort. The direct benefits of preventive investments in early childhood medicine are almost without parallel. For example, almost 25 percent of ECEAP children do not have basic immunizations when they come to the program, and for every dollar invested in immunizations, $11 is saved in corrective health care and hospital costs.

Few factors in a child's physical and mental development are as critical as adequate nutrition — but many children in poverty simply don't get an adequate and balanced diet. That is why nutrition is another major element of the health component of ECEAP, and all children in the program receive at least one meal a day during periods when they are assembled in class situations. Meals for children are designed to satisfy the Minimum Daily Requirements of as many nutritional elements as possible, and careful attention is paid to the nutritional needs of young children in the context of their culture when planning the menus. Education about nutrition is included as a component of the curriculum to encourage healthy eating habits.

Social Services

Family empowerment is a long-term goal of ECEAP, and providing families with access to social services in their communities is an expression of that commitment.

Family service staff conduct family needs assessments, and these staff are frequently able to assist families in locating community and other resources to meet family needs through referrals to social service agencies or programs.

Most families report greatly improved access to financial and basic resources over the term of their children's stay in the program. This improvement may be attributed to the networking among families and linkage with social service agencies.

Families have consistently shown marked gains in functionality and independence over a Program Year. One study of the 1986-87 Program Year, for example, showed a decline in dependency among 210 extremely dependent families at the start of the program, to 104 at the end. (Dependency was rated by such factors as whether the family had adequate access to food, shelter, clothing, work, and health providers.) More recently, a number of ECEAPs have reported very successful parent participation programs leading to GEDs or specialized training to increase employability.

Research indicates a positive correlation between the degree to which a family is able to meet its basic needs and the performance gains of children in the program. The significance of this finding is that, despite poverty, when a family is able to function well in meeting its needs, the children in the family are better able to perform well on tests of cognitive ability. It is the family *as a unit* that makes gains, and so deprives poverty of much of its effect at all levels.

Parent Involvement

Parents are recognized as the primary source of educational instruction and motivation for their children, and every possible effort is made to involve parents and to expand their involvement into all areas of the program.

The experience of being involved with ECEAP apparently also has an effect on later parental involvement in the common school system. Parents report a high frequency of contact with the schools their children attend after leaving ECEAP, and they also report feeling welcome and comfortable with their continuing involvements. Parents also have the opportunity to contribute to the development of local programs through local Parent Advisory Committees.

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The Issues and The People

No discussion of ECEAP service delivery would be complete without corresponding information on the tremendous and growing needs of families in our communities. To understand the scope and importance of the work being done in the field, it is vital to understand the complex web of issues that surround and define poverty, and that create the need for ECEAP.

Over three-fourths of Washington's new jobs are in the service industry — occupations that traditionally pay less than half the salaries associated with manufacturing trades. The impact of cutbacks in the timber industry is beginning to be felt, and will be both enormous and prolonged. Primary metals and other major industries have matured and provide few new jobs, especially for the unskilled. Most of the relatively high-paying, technology driven, service sector jobs opening in Washington require more education than many young people are receiving, and almost all of them are closed to young men and women who fail or even perform poorly in school.

The worsening employment situation for the uneducated and the undereducated means, simply, that the consequences of educational failure will only continue to deepen if educational failure is permitted to continue. Every time we lose a child to eventual unemployment or poverty, we lose not only a valuable asset in terms of potential contributions to the greater social fabric, but we gain a problem that affects us financially in profound ways — ways that we cannot afford to ignore. The pennies we spend today on intervention and prevention programs such as ECEAP lead inexorably to dollars earned and saved in the future — dollars that would either be lost from the tax base due to unemployment, or used for rescue, remediation, and punishment.

Almost 60 percent of Washington residents receiving state or federal assistance, for example, are high school dropouts, and almost seven out of ten persons in the prison population are high school dropouts.

As a group, children from economically disadvantaged families tend to be less prepared than other children for entry into mainstream education. In general, they lag behind mainstream norms in comparative emotional and social development, learning (cognitive) skills, and overall health and nutrition levels.

The economic problems of ECEAP families are often quite severe. In 1990, a family of four living at 100 percent of the Federal Poverty Level earned less than $12,700 before taxes. Put another way, that means that a family of four would be eligible for ECEAP under the poverty criterion if it has less than $8.70 per day (before taxes), per member, to pay for rent, utilities, food, clothing, medical, dental, school, transportation, and other expenses. Housing is often far from affordable, and takes a disproportionate share of that $8.70. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development has found that half of all poor renter households in the nation have rent and utility payments exceeding 65 percent of their adjusted household incomes.

ECEAP families are subject to all of these problems, and are often in very great need of assistance, on a variety of levels. Most ECEAP families, for example, earn 75 percent or less of the Federal Poverty Level — that is $6.52 a day (or less) for each person in a family of four.

There are also special population

groups with problems that create a classic "double jeopardy" situation. The constant relocations of migrant and seasonal farm worker families present a unique additional barrier to success at education for the children involved. Native American children, especially those who live on reservations, often live far from services that other children and families take for granted, and 42 percent of all Native American children drop out before completing high school.

ECEAP is currently serving children in more than 15 languages other than English, such as Vietnamese, Cambodian, Korean, Spanish, Russian, Ukrainian, and Polish. A family that is non-English speaking has special challenges, especially when the children enter the public school system.

Who We Serve

The importance of comprehensive preschool intervention for children who are identifiably at risk of failure in education because of poverty and other high impact factors cannot be overstated. Not only is the child at risk, but the family unit, as well. This is why ECEAP focuses not only on the child, but on the family -- and on the larger community in which the family lives.

Data about the family characteristics and sources of income for ECEAP families, collected as part of the longitudinal study (and other sources, where noted), make a telling case for the need for intervention. For the most part, the ECEAP child lives with two or more siblings in a household headed by a single mother who began having children very young and who dropped out of high school. The family is almost certain to be at least partially dependent on public assistance, and a public assistance dependent family's income amounts to less than 80 percent of the Federal Poverty Level. Even those families who work are likely to exist on an income that is well below the Federal Poverty Level.

ECEAP's base enrollment for 1989-1990 was 3,645, a gain of 1,619 students from the 1988-89 enrollment of 2026. In 1990-91, total enrollment slots exceed 5,000.

During the 1989-90 Program Year, ECEAP increased enrollment by expanding existing programs (adding 1,455 student enrollment slots), and adding new programs (for a combined total of 164 enrollment slots). In 1990-91, an additional 1,453 slots were added, bringing the total to 5,098.

Approximately 15,000 of Washington's four-year-old children are eligible for ECEAP or Head Start because they come from families with incomes at or below the Federal Poverty Level. For the 1990-91 Program Year, 11,595 of these children are being served by either ECEAP or Head Start, leaving an unserved population of 3,293, or 22 percent of all eligible children.

During the 1990-91 Program Year, ECEAP will work with 34 contractors at more than 114 sites in all 39 counties around the state, compared to 28 contractors in 30 counties in 1989-90.

ECEAP's federal counterpart program, Head Start, served 32 Washington counties in 1989-90. Between ECEAP and Head Start, some form of comprehensive preschool is now available to eligible at-risk children in all of Washington's 39 counties.

Youth and Motherhood

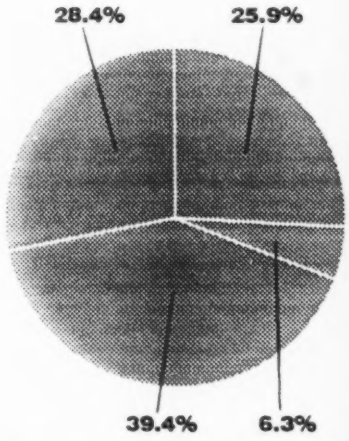
ECEAP mothers tend to follow national norms for families living in poverty. In 1986-87, one ECEAP child in six (17 percent) was born to a teen-age mother. In 1988-90, nine percent of mothers were less than 18 years old at the time they gave birth to the ECEAP child, almost 27 percent were 19 years or younger and 35 percent were under 21 — more than one child in three.

The pool of ECEAP mothers is made up of very young women, who are likely to be already parenting more than one child when the ECEAP child is enrolled — and to be doing so alone.

Parental Education

Between 1988-90, 27.9 percent of ECEAP mothers reported that they did not have high school degrees or GED equivalents. During 1988-89, 61 percent of fathers had not received high school degrees or GED equivalents. In Washington State, the average rate of early exit from high school is 22 percent.

Levels of education were not reported for 12.5 percent of the ECEAP parents, however, so this figure may not fully reflect the influence of educational attainment on poverty.



Mother's Marital Status

39.4%	*Married/Living with spouse*
28.4%	*Divorced/Separated*
25.9%	*Single*
6.3%	*Not Reported/Other*

Mother's Marital Status

The families of single mothers are massively overrepresented among the poverty population nationally, and this pattern does not change for the ECEAP population.

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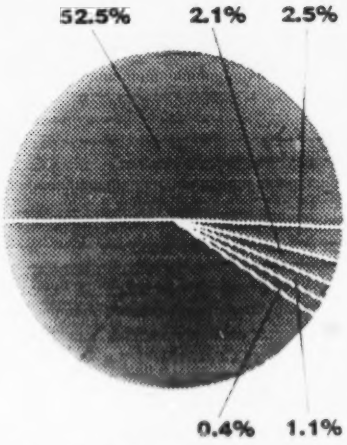

Single Mother Families

Child lives:

52.5% ..... *only with mother*
2.5% ..... *only with father or father and stepmother*
2.1% ..... *with grandparents*
1.1% ..... *with foster parents*
0.4% ..... *with other family members*

(Remainder living with both parents)

Single Mother Families

Of all ECEAP mothers, 39 percent report being married, and 37.3 percent of ECEAP children report living with both parents. However, while 61 percent of ECEAP mothers report the absence of a husband, only 52.5 percent of ECEAP children live exclusively with their mothers.

Working Mothers

In 1986-87, only 20 percent of mothers worked outside the home, while in Washington generally, 43 percent of mothers of preschool children worked outside the home. During 1988-89, 25 percent of ECEAP mothers worked outside the home (data not available for 1989-90). Since income from wages was reported at close to 40 percent during 1988-89 (as it was in 1989-90), it is clear that while ECEAP is succeeding in reaching a greater portion of the so-called "working poor," working single mothers are not well represented in this group. Although data are not available on this topic, it appears very likely that most of the wage earning in ECEAP families involves two-parent families.

Family Size

Sixty-three percent of all ECEAP families have four or more persons, a statistic made especially significant by the fact that so many ECEAP families are headed by women alone. Larger families appear to be more common as the program expands to reach new pockets of eligible families. In 1986-87, for example, only 57 percent of ECEAP families had four or more persons. Poverty tends to deepen in effect as family size increases, especially when the family is headed by a single mother.

Income Sources

In 1989-90, 62.7 percent of ECEAP families received their primary income from public assistance, and 39.3 percent from wages. A few families listed both wages and public assistance as primary sources of support, but many families have multiple sources of support. Among the acknowledged forms of supplemental income, three percent were receiving unemployment benefits (which means they had worked within the past year), and 4.2 percent received social security benefits, usually disability related. Only 4.9 percent of families reported receiving child support, in spite of the fact that most families were headed by women who were divorced or separated.

During 1986-87, nearly 70 percent of ECEAP families received their primary income from public assistance, and 27 percent from wages (the remaining three percent listed other sources of income). Since that time, active recruitment efforts by ECEAP staff and contractors have led to a higher representation — now to almost 40 percent — of families who work, but live at or below the FPL.

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Home Language

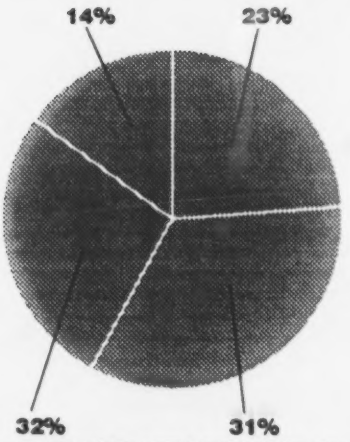
During 1989-90, approximately 83 percent of ECEAP students used English as their primary language. Of the 17 percent who did not, just over eight percent used Spanish, but ECEAP enrolled students speaking over 15 languages other than English or Spanish. The largest group of students who spoke languages other than Spanish or English (2.4 percent) used languages or dialects common to Southeast Asia. Data on primary language are not available for almost seven percent of the enrolled children during this period, but the languages used are as diverse as Russian, Polish, and Ukrainian.

Ethnicity/Race of Students

Of the 4,856 children who completed ECEAP service years between 1988 and 1990, 55.9 percent were Caucasian, 14.1 percent were Hispanic, 9.6 percent were Black, 8.7 percent were Native American, 6.7 percent were Asian/Pacific Islander, and the remainder (5 percent) were not reported or classified as "other."

Attrition

Approximately 10 percent of 1989-90 ECEAP children left without completing the year, as compared to 19 percent in 1988-89. In almost all cases, vacancies created by early exits were filled with additional children. None of the families exiting early cited dissatisfaction with the program as a reason for the early exit.



Family Size

Child lives:

14% ..... with 2 persons
23% ..... with 3 persons
32% ..... with 4 persons
31% ..... with 5-8 persons

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Transition to Kindergarten and the Public Schools

"Children don't drop out in high school. They drop out in kindergarten. They just take a few years to make it official."

Captain Kangaroo

Successful transition to kindergarten is one of the most important short-term goals of ECEAP. When ECEAP children overcome the limiting factors of poverty and do as well or better than their classmates, they have validated the program and are far more likely to succeed throughout their educational careers.

Over the next several years, samples of ECEAP children in three yearly waves will be tracked during their transition into the K-12 system, up to the fourth grade. Preliminary data suggest that the first wave of children are adjusting well, and that the cognitive, social, and emotional gains they demonstrated during their time in the program are standing them in good stead as they move into formal educational settings.

Measurement of gains at the onset of K-12 educational experiences are important because patterns of educational failure appear early, and linger long. Some studies suggest that the decision to drop out is made well before high school. Usually, the warning signs of impending attrition are laced all through a child's early educational performance. Dropping out, for most of these children, is not an impetuous act; it is the outcome they have inherited and may even envision for themselves from somewhere very close to the beginning.

ECEAP children are showing gains in kindergarten similar to those recorded in the Perry and Gray studies. There is strong cause for optimism about parallel long-term potential gains for ECEAP graduates.

While the longitudinal study mandated by ECEAP's authorizing statute is only in its second year, it is clear that the cognitive and vocabulary gains evinced by ECEAP children during their program participation remain intact at the onset of K-12 education, and that the children are continuing to demonstrate well-developed competencies in emotional and social skills.

The parents of the children remain actively involved in the education of their children, as well, and show rising expectations for their children within the educational sphere. This high rate of parental involvement is encouraged by ECEAP's emphasis on bringing the family into the preschool education of their children. Fully 76 percent of parents reported that they had attended a meeting, class, or conference in their child's school during the kindergarten year. Parent participation in school events and parent meetings is also quite strong, with two-thirds of parents reporting that they usually went to school events.

Rising expectations, continuing involvement, and well-developed competencies among the children and their parents augur very well for the future. Once again, it is the family as a unit that benefits most from ECEAP; and it is society as a whole that benefits in turn from the empowerment of these families.

Outcomes

"We cannot afford to allow children to start out on a path that begins with poor achievement and leads to truancy, behavior problems, delinquency, early pregnancy, and dropout."

Robert Slavin; "Effective Programs for Students At-Risk"

What price do we pay when we do not provide our children with the education and resources that are known to prompt success? In the short run, we pay the additional costs of special or remedial education, and retaining children who must repeat grades. In the long run, we pay the price of growing rates of high school dropouts, unemployment, teen-age pregnancy, and crime.

• Dropouts

More than one American in four does not finish high school. For minority populations, the figures are even bleaker: over 50 percent of Hispanics, 40 percent of Native Americans and 30 percent of African Americans do not graduate from high school.[2]

The cost of dropping out is one we all share. For example, the lifetime cost in lost taxes and foregone income for ***each class*** of high school dropouts is ***$260 billion***, and each high school dropout can expect to earn between $260,000 and $200,000 less than a graduating peer over his/her lifetime.[3] The children of dropouts are three times as likely to be poor as the children of parents who complete high school, and 14 times as likely to be poor as the children of parents who have one or more years of postsecondary education. High school dropouts are almost four times as likely to be arrested, six times as likely to be unwed parents, and almost eight times as likely to be welfare recipients.

The Committee for Economic Development, a private sector research group based in New York, has estimated that every $1 spent on early prevention and intervention can save almost $5 in costs of remedial education, welfare and crime.

Clearly, keeping children in high school is a major public policy goal from both an economic and a quality of life perspective, and failure to graduate from high school is at the center of a web of social ills. Nor is it merely a question of succeeding at the end; success in life is tied to success at all phases of school. As Lisbeth Schorr stated in *Within Our Reach: Breaking the Cycle of Disadvantage*, "Youngsters who never have to repeat a grade and are not in special placement are more likely to stay in school and go on to be employed and are less likely to go to prison or become dependent on public assistance."

ECEAP-type programs have repeatedly demonstrated a very positive influence on rates of high school graduation, grade repetitions, and avoidance of special placements among high-risk children. In one study (the Gray Early Training Project), graduates of an ECEAP-type program proved to be twice as likely to graduate from high school as their no-preschool counterparts. In another study (the Perry Preschool Project), two of three children who completed preschool graduated from high school, while only half of their no-preschool counterparts graduated. In both programs, preschool students were much more likely to avoid special placements and grade repetition.

Moreover, these studies show that preschool program graduates are more likely to be employed after graduation, to make higher wages when they are employed, and to save money. They are also more likely to go on to some form of postsecondary education, and nothing is more likely to break the poverty cycle than continuing education after high school.

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• Crime

The social costs of crime are extensively documented and staggering. Again and again, intervention programs dealing with crime and youth have failed to produce even marginal results, and, to many, the problem has become not the prevention of crime but catching — and punishing — criminals. Incarceration, however, is our most expensive alternative.

Not all high school dropouts are criminals, and not all criminals are high school dropouts. Yet, fully 75 percent of our prison population are high school dropouts. Six of seven arrests are of high school dropouts, and the peak age for arrests involving property crime is 16 (for crimes involving violence, the peak age is 18).

Programs like ECEAP have actually demonstrated a dramatic effect on crime in several studies. Among juveniles in the Perry Preschool Project, for example, the arrest rate among no-preschool children was twice that of preschool graduates and, among those Perry children who were arrested, there were far fewer repeat offenders. The Perry research suggests that the preschool experience fostered a sense of social responsibility in children which might otherwise not have developed fully because of factors associated with economic and social disadvantage.

We cannot afford to overlook intervention at the preschool level as a critical point for instilling in children the idea that they have alternatives to crime — and that heightened self-esteem and a sense of stewardship toward the society as a whole will stand them in good stead. Otherwise we face not only losing productive members of society and their foregone wages and taxes, but actually wasting resources on our least productive use of tax dollars: prosecution and incarceration.

• Teen-age Pregnancy

In 1987, the United States spent more than $19 billion for income maintenance, health care, and nutrition to families begun by teenagers. Over 50 percent of all welfare expenditures in this country support families begun by teen-age mothers, and every public assistance dollar is a dollar lost at both ends of the tax base.

Up to 70 percent of teen-age mothers have a second child within two years, and the average teen-age mother will have her first child at 16 years of age. Eighty-five percent of all families headed by a 20- to 24-year-old female who dropped out of high school were poor in 1985.[4]

Almost two-thirds (64 percent) of all births to women under 20 are to unmarried women, and almost all (93 percent) of the children in households headed by unmarried women experience poverty during their childhoods.[5]

Every success story involving a teen mother is an anomaly, a story of triumph against the odds. The odds are staggering, and the problem is only getting worse as it becomes more common.

Yet, both the Early Training Project and the Perry Preschool Project show that participation in an ECEAP-type program can have a dramatic and positive effect on this problem. Perry graduates, for example, were only half as likely to become pregnant as teens, and almost 90 percent of ETP graduates who did become pregnant went on to finish high school. Since even here the level of educational attainment has a dramatic effect on the likelihood of falling below the Federal Poverty Level, these "stopouts" are far less likely to suffer the extremes of poverty than their dropout peers.

Here, as elsewhere, it is the earliest investment that seems to return the biggest gains.

Administration: A Caravan of Resources

Without successful intervention early in an at-risk child's life, the picture can be quite grim. No one intervention program can be expected to work in isolation; the resources available to any one program are simply inadequate for the task at hand.

But, ECEAP does not work in isolation. It is part of a larger intervention strategy that, along with many other resources and social service agencies, is a vital element in a larger, more intricate system of support. At the heart of ECEAP is the philosophy that collaboration – a system of working in cooperation – is the key to building a social system that works not just for a few, but for all of its citizens.

ECEAP works within the vision of the bigger picture; it is a vehicle within an entire caravan of resources that, together, assure families of access to the tools and resources they need to defeat the limitations of poverty.

ECEAP is designed to operate through local organizations which contract with the state to provide high-quality, comprehensive preschool programs. At the heart of the philosophy that powers ECEAP is a commitment to the idea that the family is the major contributor to the child's development and progress, and that the community should help provide resources to families in need, to empower them in their role as parents.

The ECEAP delivery system is flexible, and can be tailored to fit the particular needs of host communities, as defined by those communities. ECEAP contractors operate both centers, which typically contain multiple classes of 18 or more children, and home-based sites, which usually contain a smaller group of up to 12 children. Home-based programs provide many of the ECEAP services in the home of the child, as well as providing more traditional group experiences for the children. In addition, ECEAP contractors are encouraged to design and propose program options that combine these two types of service, or involve other approaches that are designed to meet special community situations and problems. All programs require 1:6 adult-to-child ratios, and have teacher qualification standards.

ECEAP targets four-year-old children in families with incomes at or below the Federal Poverty Level during the year previous to enrollment, but it also reserves up to 10 percent of its enrollment slots for children who are at-risk due to circumstances in their environments or because of developmental disabilities. These children may be learning or emotionally disabled, the victims of abuse or neglect, or the children of families for whom poverty is a transitional problem.

Through additional special provisions that set aside not less than 10 percent of enrollment slots statewide for the children of Native American, migrant worker, and seasonal farmworker families, ECEAP assures that services reach these uniquely underserved groups. One particularly successful effort in this regard involves the Snohomish County ECEAP, which has facilitated coordination among a wide range of programs to serve tribal children. This task was made easier by the Centennial Accord, a formal agreement between the State of Washington and the 26 federally recognized tribal governments in Washington. The Accord is designed to maximize collaborative efforts and to develop new tools to better achieve goals held in common between the state and the tribes.

The problems of special needs client populations run deep and make substantial demands upon ECEAP administrators. In North Central Washington, for example, 22 of the 29 school districts run bilingual and/or migrant programs to provide a boost to children who are behind in school because of moves to follow farm work. While the majority of those students are Hispanic, there are also children from Southeast Asia, Japan, and even the Soviet Union. Overall, Washington has the third largest percentage of migrant students in the country, behind Texas and California. In Chelan, 21 percent of the students (215 of 1,048) are migrant children, and ECEAP offers a program that lays the foundation for much of the later work done by the school district. Of all children in the preschool program, 75 percent are Hispanic, and the program handles 27 children a year in its half-day classes. Chelan's biggest need? More teachers who can speak Spanish. Many of the district's newest students are new immigrants, with absolutely no English language skills. "I would hope the future teachers out there are taking lots of Spanish because they're going to need it," said one program director. The difficulty of recruiting and retaining bilingual and multi-cultural staff is one of the most pressing for many ECEAP providers.

Clearly, bringing ECEAP services to Native American children is such a mutually beneficial goal. ECEAP contractors and state staff have discussions with other tribal governments to improve ECEAP accessibility for eligible Native American children as ECEAP expands, and Native American representation among ECEAP children statewide already exceeds targeted goals.

The Caravan

The program emphasizes the development of cooperative efforts with agencies and service providers at all levels. In this way, resources are used to their best advantage — and administrative efforts are not duplicated.

Federal and State Collaborations

ECEAP has developed a strong partnership with the federal Head Start program, and while Head Start and ECEAP funds and standards are distinct, many contractors dovetail the resources of the two programs, to stretch the services they are able to provide to the children within each program. Eighteen ECEAP contractors (53 percent) are also Head Start contractors. In 1989-90, Head Start programs operated in 32 Washington counties, and served over 6,500 preschool children, approximately 81 percent of whom were four-year-olds.

ECEAP and other agencies throughout the State of Washington are working to further harness their efforts in tandem, to achieve the most effective possible use of state resources, personnel, and funds. From the onset, DCD has worked in collaboration with the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), and the Department of Health (DOH) to provide an umbrella of services to families, eliminate duplication of efforts, and curtail the waste of tax dollars.

The Interagency Council on Families (ICOF) is an evolution of this effort. Formed in 1990, ICOF is designed to improve services for high-risk children and their families through resource mobilization and inter-agency coordination. At the invitation of the Council of State Policy and Planning Agencies, Washington agency heads, including the Director of the Department of Community Development, attended three academies with their peers from other states to discuss and

identify exemplary service delivery concepts. Washington State department heads then held 11 public meetings throughout Washington in 1990 to identify barriers to service, to discover ways to overcome those barriers, and to identify new and innovative approaches that local communities had already developed. With an active membership that includes the heads of DCD, DSHS, OSPI, DOH, and the Employment Security Department, the work of ICOF should substantially enhance the efforts of state and community programs such as ECEAP to improve both service delivery to families and program quality across the board.

Local Level Collaborations

At the local and community level, ECEAP contractors make as much use as possible of existing resources to stretch the state's contribution and attempt to develop new community resources. Community support, through real dollars, in-kind support and volunteer hours, is an integral component of ECEAP service delivery. This collaboration provides a caravan of resources and concerned citizenry to address children's and families' needs, rather than relying on state funds alone.

Parent Involvement

Parent involvement is another vital aspect of ECEAP's success, and parents not only galvanize much of the community involvement through their participation in ECEAP, but they act as conduits between the community and the program.

This effort is augmented by the requirement that contractors develop policy councils which include up to 50 percent representation from the community at large and at least 50 percent participation by parents of children in the program. These policy councils play a dual role. They increase parental involvement in the program, but they also forge links between the program and the community. Those links often form invaluable resource and skill networks for the parents of ECEAP children, even while they produce direct resources for the children.

ECEAP contractors have successfully forged links to resources within their communities to assure more complete and more accessible services for their families.

The Broadway Community Child Center in Spokane is one model of collaboration at work. When ECEAP was added to their existing child care program, resources became more accessible for the entire community. As part of the Central Valley School District, the Broadway ECEAP, housed in an elementary school building, has provided enhanced access to community resources for parents, children, and teachers. Parents have been taking advantage of education and employment opportunities, from General Equivalency Diploma and English as a Second Language programs, to part-time jobs and college classes. In addition to ECEAP activities, children are able to participate in the special programs put on by the school, and teachers benefit through in-service training programs offered to kindergarten teachers. Even the school district has benefitted from the collaboration through expansion of services and improved information sharing about community resources.

The Paine Child Development Center in Walla Walla is another example of successful collaboration. It was designated an exemplary program by the United States Secretary of Education in the Spring of 1990 for its success in collaborating ECEAP, Head Start, Chapter I, and the district's Preschool Special Education Program.

Pullman ECEAPs have been able to add full-day care to their services due to a tremendous collaborative effort which includes the school district, area churches, United Way, the Pullman Child Welfare Committee, the Council on Aging, Aid to Families with Dependent Children, and Child Protective Services. Parents pay what they can afford for the child care portion of the program, thanks to the subsidies provided by this consortium, and a cooperative arrangement allows parents who work up to eight hours a month in the center a monthly credit toward fees. Parent involvement is intrinsic to the overall success of Pullman's ECEAPs, with over 2,700 volunteer hours tallied on a facility remodeling project alone.

Area Agencies

In 1989, as an outgrowth of the program's overall emphasis on collaborative efforts, a concept for a new ECEAP management model was born. All ECEAPs around the state were called on to develop models of management and service delivery that would enhance cooperation and encourage regional coalitions of service providers. To test the concept on a pilot program basis, as well as demonstrate the ability to coordinate resources and develop funding from other sources, six programs were selected as the initial group of "Area Agencies" and were given increased flexibility and latitude in the development of creative program approaches and coalition building.

These coalitions share resources and personnel internally, including program management functions and joint hiring of such personnel as education and family service coordinators or nutritionists. Training, transportation, and information resources are pooled within each coalition, making substantial inroads on expensive and wasteful duplications of effort.

These six Area Agencies represent unique, diversified service delivery systems. A Documentation Study, being conducted by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL), is examining each agency to assess methods of collaboration, ease of service delivery, ability to leverage resources, cost benefit, and fiscal stewardship. This study will provide a blueprint for coalition building, as demonstrated by these six Area Agencies, that can be duplicated elsewhere in the state. The study will also document what approaches did not work, or need refining.

Delivery Systems

The administrative systems by which ECEAP delivers services to families and children were developed after close study of Head Start and other systems designed to provide comprehensive preschool programs to at-risk children. ECEAP has incorporated a number of unique features into its administrative structure, features which, like the Area Agency pilot project, are designed to empower local communities and to forge resource links within communities and among families, communities, and service providers. This effort is manifest throughout the administrative structure of ECEAP, and comes to fruition in the ways in which direct service is delivered to at-risk children and families through the three principal service delivery vehicles employed by ECEAP: the Center-Based Option, the Home-Based Option, and the Locally-Designed Option.

Center-Based Options

Center-Based Options are programs in which the majority of services to children are provided at a center by professional staff. Approximately 82 percent of ECEAP students participated in center programs in 1989-90. At a minimum, centers provide 10 hours per week of child participation in activities, distributed over three or more days a week; one and one-half hours of contact time between parents and staff each month; and two education-related home visits per family during each Program Year. Class size in center units may not exceed 18 children per lead teacher, and an adult:child ratio of 1:6 or better must be maintained at all times. Lead teachers are trained early childhood education professionals. Several ECEAP centers have successfully formed community alliances and developed resources to extend their services to include a full day of care for children and their families.

Home-Based Options

Home-Based Options are service delivery models in which the majority of services to children and families are provided in the homes of the eligible children. Home-Based units are a unique delivery model that can be particularly useful where client populations are geographically too dispersed to make the operation of a center feasible, but are also frequently developed to enhance family involvement in preparing children for school. Typically, the parent of the eligible child provides the education component of the program and is guided and assisted in this by a visiting professional educator who spends ***not less*** than one and one-half hours per week with each family in the home of the child. Children in this program participate in ***at least*** one peer group experience of at least four hours per week, during which the professional educators have an opportunity to provide direct services to the child, and to assist in the development of social and cognitive skills and language development. Home-Based educators have a maximum case load of 12 children. During the weekly peer group meeting, an adult: child ratio of 1:6 or better must be maintained, as with the center option.

The Kennewick School District, an ECEAP contractor with an extremely diverse student population, provides each of its 71 children with at least two four-hour classroom sessions each week. In addition, the program conducts an average of 18 home visits a day (each at least an hour and a half), to better help parents become actively involved in the education of their children. While some Home-Based Option programs involve students who are separated by enormous distances, the Kennewick ECEAP deals with children from within a single school district and has developed its program into a model for parent involvement.

As one Kennewick mother said in a letter to Mary Frost, who oversees ECEAP at the state level, "One day an ECEAP parent educator showed up at my door and said the [district] had a new program for families with four-year-olds. She told me what it was about, and I was excited about the program because I wanted [my son] to be with other kids his age and go to school . . . . [He] was excited about it too because he got to have a teacher come to our house each week with activities and he got to go to school every week.

[My ECEAP educator] became my "positive" for the week! When she got there I was often low, but when she left I was perked up. She was always challenging me and encouraging me to share my ideas about the activities. This challenged my creativity. She was always complimenting me . . . . I felt really good when [she] was there.

ECEAP encourages parents to participate in their kid's education. . . . The staff always made us feel that they really cared about each one of us.

Right now [my son] is in kindergarten and doing great! His teacher said he's doing his best in all areas. It thrills me because ECEAP started a positiveness in our whole family. I am now a college student and my teachers say I am doing my best in all areas too! I'm doing it!"

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Locally-Designed Options

Locally-Designed Options are also encouraged, and are evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Such options may involve a combination of the two basic delivery systems, or an altogether innovative approach. Proposed departures from program standards, however, are closely scrutinized to ensure that the children and families will experience no reduction in quality or safety, and must fully reflect the comprehensive standards that are the hallmark of ECEAP.

Within those guidelines, however, Locally-Designed Options reflect ECEAP's sensitivity to local needs and allow planners to tailor their programs to meet unique local challenges.

Seattle's Neighborhood House is one example of a Locally-Designed Option at work. Through partnership with Seattle Emergency Housing Service (SEHS), Neighborhood House provides ECEAP to homeless families in the Seattle area. Children staying in SEHS emergency shelters receive two meals a day for the four days a week they come to the ECEAP classroom. The program provides stable, predictable, well-defined activities, and children participate in a weekly bus trip to the library where they enjoy storytime. Neighborhood House provides respite for parents, freeing them to look for housing and seek out other resources, and SEHS assists them in this effort.

Follow-up care is an essential component of the Neighborhood House program, with arrangements made to place children into regular ECEAPs or Head Starts on a priority basis when their families locate permanent housing.

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ECEAPs At Work

Through integration of services, individual ECEAPs across the state have found innovative ways to access and stretch resources and dollars to better serve their client families, an effort that becomes ever more critical as programs expand. From the addition of child care to the provision of opportunities for parents to return to school and to otherwise improve their employment options and prospects, ECEAPs are bringing community resources together to create a continuum of support to families.

The third largest county in the state, Snohomish has a population that is characterized by diversity of need and a strong representation of autonomous service providers. Almost 9,000 residents in the county are considered to be at nutritional risk, almost 6,000 receive AFDC, and almost 5,000 people are homeless. When Snohomish County first entered the ECEAP program, it did so with a proposal that included a team of organizations and agencies working on various aspects of the county's poverty-related problems. Agencies participating in the original proposal included county government, school districts, local Head Start providers, community colleges, the Public Health Service, and a wide array of private organizations. That team began providing ECEAP services to 108 children and in 1989-90 served 308 children. Jointly, ECEAP and Head Start have expanded from 270 children and families in 1988-89 to approximately 700 in 1990-91, a growth that has left the programs "scrambling for classrooms and teachers," according to one program director. While these programs provide very similar services, they frequently do so at different sites, although the problems of locating facilities are constant. Churches, summer camps, and senior centers, for example, have been turned into classrooms to accommodate the expansion over the past three years.

Head Start offers services in the Edmonds, Monroe, Sultan, Everett, and Snohomish School Districts, while ECEAP works with the Tulalip Tribes, Volunteers of America, and other organizations to offers services in the Mukilteo, Lake Stevens, Granite Falls, Marysville, Arlington, Lakewood, and Snohomish School Districts. The Volunteers of America ECEAP program is unique in the county, working with children who live in homeless shelters and transitional housing, and runs year round with 18 children.

Salaries

ECEAP has expanded tremendously over a short period of time in response to the growing needs of Washington's young children. This has increased the demand for qualified staff — a demand which is of growing concern to program directors. They report that their abilities to recruit and retain qualified staff are directly affected by their abilities to provide adequate salaries and training opportunities.

This concern is especially felt in rural areas where the pool of qualified teachers is even smaller than in urban areas. As the demand for qualified staff grows more acute, it will become necessary to conduct a statewide evaluation of resources to meet these crucial program needs.

Transportation

Historically, transportation has been provided to many ECEAP children by local school districts on a space-available basis. With the sudden enrollment increases experienced during 1990 in the public schools, the availability of donated transportation has diminished abruptly, causing some centers to discontinue or reduce transportation services. One contractor with a service area spanning several school districts has been informed that no donated transportation will be available in Fiscal Year 1992 from one school district in its service area, and that another school district will be forced to charge it a use fee. School districts are also indicating that contractors may have to begin providing separate insurance agreements for their children. In some cases, increased transportation costs alone could triple contractor budgets.

Facilities

Locating adequate and affordable facilities for ECEAP operations is an increasingly difficult task. As school district enrollments expand, fewer districts are able to provide in-kind donations of space; as the poverty population increases, service-provider demands increase on already scarce community resources.

ECEAP facility standards are extremely high, and as other demands crowd ECEAP out of suitable donated space, contractors are faced with serious problems in relocating.

Another contractor, in Ellensburg, has been informed of a 70 percent rent increase for 1991. Sites that are currently operating at capacity will also be confronted with "bow wave" type costs when expanding to meet new client demands.

In response to these problems, a task force of representatives from ECEAP, Head Start, and the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction was recently formed to look at ways in which these challenges might be met through cooperative arrangement.

Multilingual Services

Multilingual services are also making increasing demands on ECEAP budgets. Currently, ECEAP serves children in over 15 languages, and the costs of materials and teacher/translators for these children are increasing, as are recruitment costs for bilingual instructors.

Medical and Dental Service Donations

Both ECEAP and Head Start enrollments have increased precipitously over the past four years, and the strain on in-kind providers of medical and dental services is increasing dramatically. As demand increases, the available pool of service providers may be stretched beyond their capacity — or willingness — to donate services.

Special Factors

All programs participate in the United States Department of Agriculture Child Food and Nutrition Program and receive subsidized child food and nutrition program assistance. During class and peer group activity times, all children are provided meals and snacks that meet minimum daily nutrition needs. Children and staff eat together during meals, sharing the same menu, and developing a rapport through the sharing of a social experience in a relaxed atmosphere.

Staff development funds are made available to all contractors, and all professional staff are engaged in a continuous process of upgrading their skills.

Each contractor must develop a Health Services Advisory Committee and a Policy Council. These groups enable parents to actively advise, plan, and lend guidance in the delivery of all aspects of ECEAP services, and create invaluable links to and with the community through committee memberships and professional liaisons.

Challenges to ECEAP: *The Immediate Future*

Success does not come without hurdles, and as ECEAP moves into its fifth year, a number of challenges are confronting DCD and ECEAP service providers. Principle among these are the difficulty of recruiting qualified staff at presently authorized salary levels, the diminishing availability of affordable and suitable sites for ECEAP classes, the impact of increased demands on in-kind donations of medical/dental services, the reduced availability of donated transportation due to increases in public school enrollments, and the increasing strain of providing services to high-risk and non-English speaking families.

The competition for resources sometimes pits human services agencies against one another in unlikely ways. The Skagit Valley Herald reported on August 21, 1990, for example, that two public service programs were in competition for a single, low-rent facility. One of the competitors was an ECEAP center, the other an agency seeking the building to set up employment counseling and referral services. At the time of the conflict, the ECEAP had developed a center-based site, but was using a home setting as a stopgap, pending location of a building appropriate to, and inexpensive enough for, another Center-Based Option site. "It's the first time we've had competition like this," an Island County Commissioner told the Herald. It is almost certainly not going to be the last.

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Where ECEAP is Headed: Transitions and Goals

How Far We Have To Go

At an average statewide cost of approximately $3,000 per child, ECEAP is proving to be an excellent investment, and in more ways than purely financial. In just four years time, over 8,700 Washington children, more than 12,000 parents, and unknown thousands of other family members have been served by ECEAP, both directly and indirectly, and many in ways that will result in massive savings of funds that might later have been spent for intervention, rescue, or even punishment. Every bit of existing research shows that the prevention of a problem is far less expensive than its correction, and the problems ECEAP addresses are among our nation's most expensive. It makes a compelling case for ECEAP: by preventing those problems at a relatively low cost per child, we can expect not only to benefit from reduced future expenditures, but also from increased productivity generated through educational successes and family empowerment.

Without an adequate education, our citizens cannot realize their full potential.

If we are to empower a society of full and equal opportunity, we must begin by assuring that all of our members have an equal chance at success. Education is the door to this success, and ECEAP can be the key.

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However, not all of our children are being given the opportunity to realize this success. Even using eligibility guidelines that require a family to be living at or below 100 percent of the Federal Poverty Level, approximately 3,300 four-year-old Washington children (ECEAP's target age group) are still unserved by either ECEAP or Head Start. Still, we are far from where we were only a few years ago -- and current funding requests for ECEAP and Head Start combined would enable us to serve these remaining children.

The Future of ECEAP: The Vision

In our society, all children are at-risk. The Governor and the Legislature realized this when they first funded ECEAP, with the idea that we would begin serving our most obviously in-need population first. The importance of early childhood education has been well recognized, and the decision to first make ECEAP primarily available to low-income children was made with the understanding that the poor are least able to afford the educational, social, and health services provided by ECEAP.

As this document goes to print, a request for enhanced ECEAP funding has gone before the Legislature. According to the Office of Financial Management, there are 14,888 four-year-olds living at or below 100 percent of the Federal Poverty Level in Washington. Head Start will be serving 7,077 four-year-olds (an addition of 587 children) in the upcoming Biennium. With current enrollment, ECEAP serves 5,098 children. This leaves a balance of 2,713 children who remain unserved. The enhancement request of $14 million would provide services to these remaining children.

As ECEAP reaches into regions and populations which are more difficult to serve, our job will become more challenging. And, as the 1990 census data is examined, we may discover that the eligible population has grown. Trends in the poverty rate over the past 10 years suggest this is a strong possibility.

As local communities step up to the challenges ahead, and succeed in forging links among service providers at all levels, these hurdles will be crossed. The Washington we envision for the future will have in place an infrastructure of support services that makes resources available to all families.

The state alone cannot meet all the needs that exist for families. But, working in partnership with other levels of government, we can create a support system in which communities band together, and provide a caravan of resources that stretch across federal, state, and local levels to ensure every child's needs are met.

The Governor's Support

Expansion of ECEAP into all Washington counties is a direct result of Governor Booth Gardner's leadership in developing a program that has consistently elicited strong bipartisan support from the Legislature. Governor Gardner has been nationally recognized for his aggressive and thoughtful commitment to education, and serves as Chairperson of the Education Commission of the States. In testimony before the U.S. Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee, the Governor warned that we are losing an entire generation because our investments in education have been too small and too sporadic. Calling early childhood education our most cost-effective means of preventing a host of social ills, he urged federal, state, and local governments to forge partnerships with which to leverage resource investments. "Education is the key," the Governor told the Committee, "to both a quality of life for individuals and economic development for our state and nation."

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Conclusion

"I believe every child can learn."

Governor Booth Gardner, in a speech before the Seattle Rotary, July 1990

Changing family configurations, employment trends, and growing multi-cultural populations challenge our society and education systems as never before. ECEAP was born as a result of the Governor's and the Legislature's recognition of the needs these challenges present.

Without the advantage of ECEAP, too many of our young children would begin school unprepared: unprepared for the educational and social experience; unprepared for success. Unless we are willing to pay the price of remediation for a child who has already begun to demonstrate problems, or the price of punitive actions for one who has slipped away from us and met with failure, we are well advised to make use of our resources now, with preventive programs like ECEAP. We must begin at the beginning if we are to succeed at the end.

While our social and economic climate may have changed radically over the past few decades, children's needs have not. Children need safe, nurturing environments in which to learn, grow, and develop. Parents need support, too, if they are to be effective in their roles as educators and care-givers. Parenting does not often come naturally, especially where the traditional support systems that were once an integral part of the extended nuclear family have vanished. This gap in resources is debilitating not just to the particular family suffering a shortage of time, energy, and money; it erodes the entire social fabric. The child who grows up in chronic deprivation, with no vision of success, is far less likely to grow into a contributing member of the larger social system. All too often, such a child will become a victim of that society, or a drain upon it, and will ultimately become yet another link in a chain of poverty-related issues that include chronic unemployment and underemployment, drug use, crime, narrow aspirations, and burgeoning high school dropout rates.

We see those lives now, in too many of our disenfranchised, and too often even in our working poor. Their numbers are growing, and we ignore at our own great peril those preventive steps we might take now. The price we will pay tomorrow if we ignore those of our children who need help today can only be described as appalling. The Governor has strongly voiced his commitment to the ideal that every child *can* learn, and that every child should be empowered *to* learn. In a speech before the Seattle Rotary in July 1990, the Governor challenged Washington to be the first state in the country to ensure *every* child is prepared for success in school.

The potential for a future in which ECEAP figures prominently in the lives of families is quite different from that of the grim future painted by present trends and statistics. Children who may have started down the perilous road to failure in school have seen a brighter future for themselves, and with that vision, stand a good chance of creating on-going success for themselves.

We should applaud ourselves for the good work already done; for the support from lawmakers and the dedication of countless educators across the state who are daily making a difference in the lives of children. And then, we must get on with the work. We must take our successes and use them as a basis for further work, and we must rise to the challenges ahead. Our work will not be done until all our children have been provided with the resources and opportunities they need to create the future of their dreams.

ECEAP is an investment in our future – the children of today.

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